# MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

*Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff*

December 9, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As the chief law enforcement officers tasked with managing the ongoing protest actions in North Dakota surrounding the completion of the Dakota Access pipeline, we are writing to request that the federal government begin supporting North Dakota and North Dakota law enforcement with actions, not words.

The November 25th letter sent by Colonel Henderson of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman David Archambault informing him of the closure of Corps land to public use as of December 5th was an important and heartening step, but this past Sunday's ruling by the U.S.A.C.E. against the pipeline's easement has done nothing to ease the tension or alleviate the potential for more violence.

We cannot express strongly enough our need for financial assistance and additional manpower in order to follow through on the demands made in the November 25th letter and respond to the increasingly dangerous situation developing on federal land owned by the Corps. Specifically, the support of one hundred Border Patrol agents and members of the U.S. Marshal Special Operations Group would allow us to maintain effective control over this situation.

It is our concern that if we do not receive federal assistance, the safety and wellbeing of law enforcement officers, citizens of the community, and the protestors themselves are at grave risk. After months under siege by near daily protest actions, community sentiment has turned volatile and there are too many discussions where local groups speak of the possibility to take matters into their own hands. We have repeatedly spoken out against these ideas, but genuinely fear emotions are running too high and this situation could lead to tragic consequences.

Throughout this process, law enforcement has acted methodically, safely, and with great restraint. Our only concern is the safety of our state, its citizens, and those who visit, including those who peacefully exercise their First Amendment rights. And yet, instead of embracing us as partners in an effort to defend the rule of law, the federal government has treated us as though we are not to be trusted.

To be clear, these protests are a series of federal problems that have been foisted upon the citizens and law enforcement officers of North Dakota. From the very beginning, the opposition during the permitting process and court hearings surrounding this pipeline has been exacerbated by political interference. These protestors have and continue to find sanctuary on federal land, where they stage and plan criminal activities to be executed in our communities. However, every time we have asked the federal government for assistance, they have instead responded with resistance.

205 First Avenue NW Mandan, ND 58554
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Despite this sweeping federal inaction, every time the offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are protested, who is asked to respond? Local law enforcement. When protestors take over the lobby of the William Guy federal building in Bismarck, who is asked to respond? Local law enforcement. Time and time again we have answered the call to come to the aid of the federal government. But when seeking a modicum of reciprocity, we have been completely and utterly abandoned.

The strength of this country has always come from the stability of our rule of law. A system which no ideology, political interference, or personal opinion is meant to influence. Unfortunately, we have seen just the opposite from our federal leaders during this trying time. It appears they are more responsive to social media rhetoric and misinformation than they are to facts and pleas for assistance from fellow law abiding government officials.

The federal government's response to the events in our community has been appalling, and it is abundantly clear they have no interest in helping the citizens of North Dakota. Frankly, our federal leaders should be ashamed of their lack of response to a dangerous crisis currently in progress on their own soil. Each day this lack of response continues only serves to empower criminal protestors and support lawlessness in the name of radical political agendas.

As our law enforcement officers are forced to spend countless days away from their families – missing holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries – the knowledge that the federal government could supply assistance, but refuses to do so, is unbelievably disheartening. Our officers are facing direct and overt threats, not just to themselves but to their families, and the lack of intervention or sympathy from the federal government is truly staggering.

But it is not just law enforcement who the federal government has abandoned, the true victims are the peaceful citizens of North Dakota. These are people whose right to simply move freely throughout their community – without fear of intimidation, harassment, and violence – is being infringed upon. Tasks as simple as going to the bank or allowing school children play outside during recess have become a daily trial for the local community here.

Despite our anger and frustration with federal officials in Washington DC, their local representatives, specifically U.S. Attorney Chris Myers and U.S. Marshal Paul Ward, have been tireless champions of our cause. They understand the dynamics of what is occurring within their community and have repeatedly communicated this through their chain of command, only to be met with resistance and contempt for their concerns.

Perhaps those individuals at the highest levels of our government who have repeatedly refused our requests for help should reread the oath of office they once took and recall who and what it is they swore to protect and defend. As law enforcement executives and North Dakotans, we will stand together to uphold the rule of law in our community, and will continue to do so regardless of your response or lack thereof.

Sincerely,

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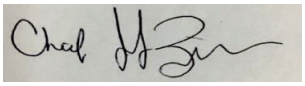
Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier

Cass County Sheriff Paul Laney

Burleigh County Sheriff Pat Heinert

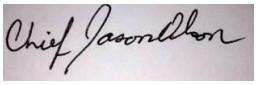
Stutsman County Sheriff Chad Kaiser

Mercer County Sheriff Dean Danzeisen

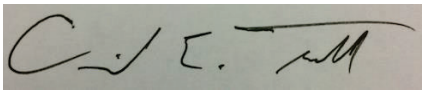


Mandan Police Chief Jason Ziegler

Bismarck Police Chief Dan Donlin



Minot Police Chief Jason Olson



Fargo Police Chief David Todd

Jamestown Police Chief Scott Edinger

Wahpeton Police Chief Scott Thorsteinson

North Dakota Highway Patrol Colonel Michael Gerhart Jr.

cc: Loretta E. Lynch, Attorney General
Sally Jewel, Secretary of the Interior
Eric Fanning, Secretary of the Army

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